Significance of and Challenges in Lateral Entry

Why in news?

The Centre has recently appointed 9 non-governmental professionals selected by the UPSC, under the lateral entry scheme.

Click here to know more on the earlier government notification.

What is the significance of the move?

- Globalisation has made the business of governance an increasingly complex activity.
- It demands specialist skills and knowledge like never before.
- Given this, the appointments under the lateral entry scheme is a sensible first step towards accessing a wider talent pool.
- The move directly inducts private sector experts into the ranks of the civil service, with specified posts and salary scales and perks.
- The move marks a great leap forward in the institutional outlook of the UPSC.

What are the challenges involved?

- Inducting private sector experts into line functions involves a host of institutional challenges.
- Chief among them is the quality of people who are hired.
- External experts have to meet a specified educational qualification norm.
- Those shortlisted should undergo UPSC interviews before signing on.
- But it is unclear whether this is an optimal way of inducting external experts.
- The second challenge is how far the government can leverage the lateral entrants' expertise.
- This requires the creation of an enabling environment for them to function, who may find it difficult in a bureaucratic environment.
- It's because it demands a high degree of cooperation from the bureaucracy, where exists already the tension between generalists and specialists.
- External experts also discover that the basics such as access to files and to ministerial meetings can become matters of high politics.
- Much, therefore, depends on how far the political executive is willing to facilitate the functioning of these external experts.

Click here to read more on the concerns with the lateral entry scheme

What lies ahead?

- Going beyond the civil services, it is now time for the government to widen the ambit of its search for regulatory heads.
- At present, most of the selection of sectoral regulators or tribunal heads appears to be earmarked for retired bureaucrats and public sector company chiefs.
- Beyond this, there is certainly a wealth of talent in the Indian private sector and the diaspora that the government could access.
- Utilising these could improve the quality of policy decision-making.
- In the larger context, therefore, lateral entries into the civil services would be a good test case.

Source: Business Standard

